

Record of Decision

Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont

**USDA Forest Service
Southern Region
Atlanta, GA**

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi,
North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas

October 2002

Decision and Reasons for the Decision

Background

This Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement addresses a proposal to clarify direction concerning requirements for conducting project-level inventories for those activities covered under the Vegetation Management EIS (VMEIS). The vegetation management activities covered by the VMEIS include herbicide use, prescribed fire, and mechanical site preparation, but do not include commercial timber harvesting. The proposed change (decision to be made) is limited to modification of specific language in a portion of one of the General Mitigation measures in the VMEIS (Volume I, Chapter II.E.1.a(2) and in the Record of Decision (page A-1) for the Final VMEIS. This decision amends the forest plans for national forests in the Coastal Plains/Piedmont. The supplement to the environmental impact statement (SEIS) documents the analysis of effects of the change. The proposal does not change the Purpose and Need of the original VMEIS.

Decision

I have decided to implement the proposed action. This change does not modify alternatives A through H of the original VMEIS since it applies only to a mitigation measure which is common to all of those alternatives. Based upon my review of all alternatives, I have decided to implement the proposed change as shown below in Exhibits 1 and 2. The original wording in Exhibit 1 is found in both the Record of Decision (page A-1) and in the VMEIS (Vol. I, Chap. II.E.1.a(2), page II-45) and will be changed. Exhibit 2 presents the proposed new wording.

Exhibit 1. Original Wording
“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive, is done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers all available inventories of threatened, endangered, proposed and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area. When adequate population inventory information is unavailable, it must be collected when the site has high potential for occupancy by a threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species. ”

Exhibit 2. New Wording
“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive shall be done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers available information on threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area.”

Compared to taking no action the proposed action better addresses the need to make project-level Biological Evaluation (BE) information consistent and efficient throughout the Region. Direction on inventories for BEs for all projects is now contained in an R8 Supplement to the 2672 Forest Service Manual. This decision will promote consistency and compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

There were two significant issues developed as a result of scoping for the proposal: 1) whether or not the proposed changes in inventory requirements weaken protection of Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive (PETS) species and 2) whether or not costs should be a factor in determining inventory requirements. The first significant issue regarding this proposal was developed because some commentors felt the proposal would cause non-compliance with NEPA, NFMA, or ESA. The other significant issue was whether cost should be a factor in the job of collecting information about PETS species on projects. While the analysis addresses the issue of costs, the primary factor in making this decision is the need to clarify what are the appropriate methods for PETS species information collection. The Region now has Manual direction (R8 Supplement to FSM 2672) that covers collection of project-level information for PETS species for all projects, not only vegetation management projects. In addition, we will soon have peer-reviewed procedures for information collection on species groups.

This decision amends the following forest plans: the National Forests in Alabama, the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (Georgia), the Croatan-Uwharrie National Forests (North Carolina), the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests (South Carolina), the Kisatchie National Forest (Louisiana), the National Forests in Mississippi, the National Forests in Florida, and the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas. The amendments to these Plans are included in the appendix.

Alternative to the Proposed Action Considered

Besides the selected alternative, I considered an alternative that made no changes to the VMEIS. After considering the analysis of the effects of both, I have determined that the Proposed Action is the environmentally preferred alternative.

Public Involvement

Scoping

On September 7, 2001, Region 8 of the Forest Service published a Notice of Intent to supplement three VMEISs in the Southern Region; Appalachian Mountains, Coastal Plain/Piedmont, and Ozark/Ouachita Mountains in the *Federal Register*. On August 31, 2001, the Forest Service mailed letters to interested and affected agencies, associations, businesses, individuals, organizations, and tribal nations (for a total of about 20,000) on the forest planning mailing lists for each of the national forests covered by these VMEISs.

Consultation with the federally recognized Indian tribes of the Region was offered to the tribes based on Executive Order No. 13175, Section 3.

The Southern Region received about 150 written responses to scoping during a 30-day comment period. The Forest Service Content Analysis Team in Salt Lake City, UT, processed and analyzed all of the responses and prepared a report. The ID team used the comments received to identify significant issues and concerns related to the Proposed Action.

Using the comments from the public, other agencies, and groups (see *Issues* section), the interdisciplinary team identified two issues regarding the effects of the proposed action. To address these issues, the Forest Service created the alternatives described above.

Implementation Date

This decision applies to the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (Amendment No. 21), National Forests in Alabama (Amendment No. 18), The Croatan-Uwharrie National Forests (Amendment No. 6), Francis Marion National Forest (Amendment No. 1), National Forests in Mississippi (Amendment No. 16), National Forests and Grasslands in Texas (Amendment No. 4), National Forests in Florida (Amendment No. 1), Kisatchie National Forest (Amendment No. 1), and the Sumter National Forest (Amendment No. 15). The Forest Plan Amendments are attached. This decision is effective seven days after publication of the legal notice in the newspaper of record.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision may be appealed in accordance with 36 CFR 217 by filing a written notice of appeal, in duplicate, within 45 days of the publication of the legal notice. The appeal must be in writing clearly stating that it is a Notice of Appeal being filed pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Appeals must be filed with the Chief of the Forest Service at either of the following addresses:

Regular Mail:

USDA, Forest Service, EMC, Appeals
Mail Stop 1104
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Express Mail:

USDA Forest Service
EMC
201 14th Street SW
Yates Building, 3 Central
Washington, DC 20250

The notice of appeal must include sufficient narrative evidence and argument to show why this decision should be changed or reversed (36 CFR 217.9).

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Robert Wilhelm, 404-347-7076.

/s/Roberta A. Moltzen
for

ROBERT T. JACOBS
Regional Forester
Southern Region

10/25/2002

[DATE]

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Forest Plan Amendments

National Forests in Florida	Amendment # 1
Kisatchie National Forest	Amendment # 1
National Forests in Alabama	Amendment # 18
Croatan National Forest	Amendment # 6
Francis Marion National Forest	Amendment # 1
National Forests in Mississippi	Amendment # 16
National Forests and Grasslands in Texas	Amendment # 4
Sumter National Forest	Amendment # 15

**National Forests in Florida
Revised Land and Resource Management Plan
(Forest Plan)**

**Amendment # 1
September 2002**

This amendment provides clarification of direction for the preparation of site-specific Biological Evaluations (BEs) including inventory requirements for Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive (PETS) species for the National Forests in Florida to make the process of conducting BEs more efficient and consistent throughout the Southern Region of the Forest Service and to remove specific current language from a Forest wide standard.

Change in wording – Final EIS, Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont:
The wording in Exhibit 1 below is found in both the Record of Decision (page A-1) and in a portion of one General Mitigation Measure (Vol. I, Chap. II.E.1.a(2) of the Vegetation Management Environmental Impact Statement in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont. The wording in Exhibit 2 as stated in the Record of Decision and the Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont will provide direction concerning requirements for conducting project level inventories for those activities covered under the VMEIS. The differences between the exhibits are shown in bold print. Determination of when project level inventory information should be gathered would be made based on the direction contained in the Regional supplement to Forest Service Manual 2672.

Exhibit 1. Previous Wording

“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive, is done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers all available inventories of threatened, endangered, proposed and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area. When adequate population inventory information is unavailable, it must be collected when the site has high potential for occupancy by a threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species. ”

Exhibit 2. New Wording

“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive shall be done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers available information on threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area.”
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Change in wording – National Forests in Florida Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, page 1-2, last paragraph:
(Add bold print.)

“Record of Decision, Final Environmental Impact Statement for Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont (USDA Forest Service, Southern Region, February 1989) as supplemented (September, 2002.) ”

Change in wording – National Forests in Florida Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, page 1-3:

(Delete)

“Direction is included in the Forestwide Standards and Guidelines (3-26) which clarifies the appropriate methods of project level inventory/surveys for TES species when conducting biological evaluations. This change in language found on page A-1, Section I.A.(2) of the Vegetation Management Record of Decision.”

Change to the Forest Plan/Forestwide Standards and Guidelines:

The following section is removed from the Forestwide Standards and Guidelines, Chapter 3 of the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) for the National Forests in Florida.

LRMP page 3-26 –

...Appropriate project-level inventory/surveys for a TES species are the following:

- Gathering and summarizing population occurrence data from the Forest Service and other sources such as the State Natural Heritage Program.
- Collecting information on the amount and distribution of suitable habitat
- Conducting field surveys to determine species occurrence, if past field surveys are not available in areas where treatments are proposed. Field surveys are only appropriate for those species that lend themselves to this type of survey. Actual field surveys may not be appropriate for species (1) when field surveys have a low likelihood of detecting the species, (2) when there is sufficient confidence that the proposed activities will have short or long-term beneficial or no effect to the species, or (3) when the science regarding species/habitat relationships and the response of habitat to proposed activities is well established.

NFMA Significance

This amendment is not a significant change in the Florida Revised Forest Plan. The determination that this is a non-significant amendment is made in accordance with the regulations in 16 USC 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f), and the Forest Service Manual 1922.5, Land and Resource Management Planning, Amendments. This plan amendment meets the criteria for a non-significant amendment because these changes will not “significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goals and objectives originally projected... [or] have an important effect on the entire forest plan or affect resources throughout a large portion of the planning area during the planning period. (FSM 1922.52.)

**Kisatchie National Forest
Revised Land and Resource Management Plan
(Forest Plan)**

**Amendment # 1
September 2002**

This amendment provides clarification of direction for the preparation of site-specific Biological Evaluations (BEs) including inventory requirements for Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive (PETS) species for the Kisatchie National Forest to make the process of conducting BEs more efficient and consistent throughout the Southern Region of the Forest Service and to remove specific current language from a Forest wide standard.

Change in wording – Final EIS, Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont:
The wording in Exhibit 1 below is found in both the Record of Decision (page A-1) and in a portion of one General Mitigation Measure (Vol. I, Chap. II.E.1.a(2) of the Vegetation Management Environmental Impact Statement in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont. The wording in Exhibit 2 as stated in the Record of Decision and the Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont will provide direction concerning requirements for conducting project level inventories for those activities covered under the VMEIS. The differences between the exhibits are shown in bold print. Determination of when project level inventory information should be gathered would be made based on the direction contained in the Regional supplement to Forest Service Manual 2672.

Exhibit 1. Previous Wording

“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive, is done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers all available inventories of threatened, endangered, proposed and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area. When adequate population inventory information is unavailable, it must be collected when the site has high potential for occupancy by a threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species. ”

Exhibit 2. New Wording

“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive shall be done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers available information on threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area.”
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Change to the Forest Plan/Forestwide Standards and Guidelines:

In addition, the following portion is removed from FW-009 of the Forestwide Standards and Guidelines, Chapter 2 of the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) for the Kisatchie National Forest.

...Appropriate project-level inventory/surveys for a PETS species are the following:

- ☐ Gathering and summarizing population occurrence data from the Forest Service and other sources such as the State Natural Heritage Program.
- ☐ Collecting information on the amount and distribution of suitable habitat.
- ☐ For some PETS species expected to occur in the vicinity of the project, additional field surveys done in suitable habitat potentially affected by the proposed project is desirable to document the presence or absence of these species. These field surveys would be most appropriate if past field surveys are not available for such areas and if they would provide more definitive information to improve the determination of effects for PETS species. However, there are some PETS species and situations where the information to determine potential effects to PETS species may not require population surveys. These situations occur when: (1) there is a low likelihood of detecting a species, the field survey would probably not provide definitive information for excluding a species from further consideration, (2) established Plan direction or mitigation, that effectively protect PETS species expected to occur in suitable habitat in the project vicinity, are already in place and are part of the proposed action, or (3) a PETS species habitat requirements are well known and there is sufficient evidence that the proposed activities will have short- or long-term beneficial effects or no effects to PETS species, or to the range-wide viability of sensitive species expected to occur in the area. For all three previous situations, the PETS species in question would be assumed to occur in the area and effects to it would be addressed in the effects analysis.

Use the appropriate information discussed above to analyze, disclose, and document effects on PETS species.

NFMA Significance:

This amendment is not a significant change in the Kisatchie Revised Forest Plan. The determination that this is a non-significant amendment is made in accordance with the regulations in 16 USC 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f), and the Forest Service Manual 1922.5, Land and Resource Management Planning, Amendments. This plan amendment meets the criteria for a non-significant amendment because these changes will not “significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goals and objectives originally projected... [or] have an important effect on the entire forest plan or affect resources throughout a large portion of the planning area during the planning period. (FSM 1922.52.)

**National Forests in Alabama
Land and Resource Management Plan**

**Amendment # 18
September 2002**

This amendment provides direction for the preparation of site-specific Biological Evaluations (BEs) including inventory requirements for Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive (PETS) species for the National Forests in Alabama to make the process of conducting BEs more efficient and consistent throughout the Southern Region of the Forest Service. The amendment deletes the direction provided in Amendment #17 of the Land and Resource Management Plan for the National Forests in Alabama (March 22, 2000) and replaces it with direction provided in the Record of Decision for the Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont. The Supplement to the VMEIS change specific language in a portion of one of the General Mitigation Measures (Coastal Plain/Piedmont VMEIS Vol I, Chap. II.E.1.a(2), page II-45 and in the Record of Decision, page A-1).

Delete the following from Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines.
(Amendment #17, March 22, 2000)

A biological evaluation of whether, and to what extent, a management action could affect any species federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), or designated by the Forest Service as sensitive, is prepared as part of environmental analysis for project level decision making. The procedures for biological evaluations are found in Forest Service Manual, Chapter 2670, *Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive Plants and Animals*.

During the biological evaluation process to identify possible effects, existing available information will be used to determine the PETS species known or expected to occur in the vicinity of the proposed project, or likely to be affected by the action. The information considered may include data on species/habitat relationships, species range distribution, and population occurrences developed from past field surveys or observations. Additional available information will be used on the amount, condition, and distribution of suitable habitat for PETS species in the vicinity of the proposed project.

For some PETS species expected to occur in the vicinity of the project, or likely to be affected by the project, additional field surveys conducted in suitable habitat that is potentially affected by the proposed project is desirable to document the presence or absence of these species. These field surveys would be appropriate if past field surveys are not available for such areas and if they would provide more definitive information to improve the determination of effects to PETS species.

However, there are some PETS species and situations where the information to determine potential effects to PETS species may not require population surveys. For these situations, the PETS species in question would be assumed to occur in the area, and effects to it would be considered in the effects analysis. These situations occur when:

1. There is a low likelihood of detecting a species; the field survey would probably not provide definitive information for excluding a species from further consideration.
2. Established LRMP direction or mitigation, which effectively protect PETS species expected to occur in suitable habitat in the project vicinity, is already in place and is part of the proposed action.
3. Habitat requirements of a PETS species are well known and (a) there is sufficient evidence that the proposed actions would have only short- or long-term beneficial effects or no effects (no adverse effects) to PETS species, or (b) that any expected adverse effects of the proposed actions would not likely cause a trend to federal listing or a loss in viability of a sensitive species.

Replace with:

(Source: Supplement to the Final EIS Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont)

“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive shall be done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers available information on threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area.”

NFMA Significance:

This amendment is not a significant change in the Alabama National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan. The determination that this is a non-significant amendment is made in accordance with the regulations in 16 USC 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f), and the Forest Service Manual 1922.5, Land and Resource Management Planning, Amendments. This plan amendment meets the criteria for a non-significant amendment because these changes will not “significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goals and objectives originally projected... [or] have an important effect on the entire forest plan or affect resources throughout a large portion of the planning area during the planning period. (FSM 1922.52.)

**Croatan-Uwharrie National Forests
Land and Resource Management Plan**

**Amendment # 6
September 2002**

This amendment provides clarified direction for the preparation of site-specific Biological Evaluations (BEs) including inventory requirements for Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive (PETS) species for the Croatan-Uwharrie National Forests to make the process of conducting BEs more efficient and consistent throughout the Southern Region of the Forest Service. This amendment changes the respective portions of the Croatan-Uwharrie National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan that were instituted by Amendment #3 (Exhibit G – Record of Decision – Vegetation Management – Coastal Plain/Piedmont), January 1989, as follows:

Change in wording – Final EIS, Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont:

The wording in Exhibit 1 below is found in both the Record of Decision (page A-1) and in a portion of one General Mitigation Measure (Vol. I, Chap. II.E.1.a(2) of the Vegetation Management Environmental Impact Statement in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont (VMEIS.) The wording in Exhibit 2, as stated in the Record of Decision and the Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont provides direction concerning requirements for conducting project level inventories for those activities covered under the VMEIS. The differences between the exhibits are shown in bold. Determination of when project-level inventory information should be gathered will be made based on the direction now contained in the Regional supplement to FSM 2672 (February 13, 2002.)

Exhibit 1. Previous Wording
“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive, is done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers all available inventories of threatened, endangered, proposed and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area. When adequate population inventory information is unavailable, it must be collected when the site has high potential for occupancy by a threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species. ”

Exhibit 2. New Wording
“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive shall be done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers available information on threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area.”

NFMA Significance:

This amendment is not a significant change in the Croatan-Uwharrie National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan. The determination that this is a non-significant amendment is made in accordance with the regulations in 16 USC 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f), and the Forest Service Manual 1922.5, Land and Resource Management Planning, Amendments. This plan amendment meets the criteria for a non-significant amendment because these changes will not “significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goals and objectives originally projected... [or] have an important effect on the entire forest plan or affect resources throughout a large portion of the planning area during the planning period. (FSM 1922.52.)

**Francis Marion National Forest
Revised Land and Resource Management Plan**

**Amendment # 1
September 2002**

This amendment provides direction for the preparation of site-specific Biological Evaluations (BEs) including inventory requirements for Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive (PETS) species on the Francis Marion National Forest to make the process of conducting BEs more efficient and consistent throughout the Southern Region of the Forest Service. This amendment changes portions of the Francis Marion National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, December 1995, as follows:

Change in wording – Final EIS, Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont:

The wording in Exhibit 1 below is found in both the Record of Decision (page A-1) and in a portion of one General Mitigation Measure (Vol. I, Chap. II.E.1.a(2) of the Vegetation Management Environmental Impact Statement in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont (VMEIS.) The wording in Exhibit 2, as stated in the Record of Decision and the Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont provides direction concerning requirements for conducting project level inventories for those activities covered under the VMEIS. The differences between the exhibits are shown in bold. Determination of when project-level inventory information should be gathered will be made based on the direction now contained in the Regional supplement to FSM 2672 (February 13, 2002.)

Exhibit 1. Previous Wording

<p>“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive, is done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers all available inventories of threatened, endangered, proposed and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area. When adequate population inventory information is unavailable, it must be collected when the site has high potential for occupancy by a threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species.”</p>

Exhibit 2. New Wording

<p>“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive shall be done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers available information on threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area.”</p>

Change in wording – Francis Marion National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, page 8:
(Add bold print.)

“Final Environmental Impact Statement - Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont (R8-VM) (USDA Forest Service-Southern Region, January 1989) as supplemented (September, 2002.)”

Change in wording – Francis Marion National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, page 3-1, second paragraph:
(Add bold print.)

“Final Environmental Impact Statement - Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont (R8-VM) as supplemented (September, 2002.)”

Change in wording – Francis Marion National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, page 3-13, FW-134 (R8-VM).
(Delete the following)

...”When adequate inventory information is unavailable, it must be collected when the site has high potential for occupancy by a threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species.”

NFMA Significance:

This amendment is not a significant change in the Revised Francis Marion National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The determination that this is a non-significant amendment is made in accordance with the regulations in 16 USC 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f), and the Forest Service Manual 1922.5, Land and Resource Management Planning, Amendments. This plan amendment meets the criteria for a non-significant amendment because these changes will not “significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goals and objectives originally projected... [or] have an important effect on the entire forest plan or affect resources throughout a large portion of the planning area during the planning period. (FSM 1922.52.)

National Forests in Mississippi Land and Resource Management Plan

Amendment # 16 September 2002

This amendment provides direction for the preparation of site-specific Biological Evaluations (BEs) including inventory requirements for Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive (PETS) species for the National Forests in Mississippi to make the process of conducting BEs more efficient and consistent throughout the Southern Region of the Forest Service. This amendment changes portions of the Mississippi National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, Amendment # 6 (Exhibit F – Record of Decision – Vegetation Management – Coastal Plain/Piedmont), January 1989, as follows:

Change in wording – Final EIS, Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont:

The wording in Exhibit 1 below is found in both the Record of Decision (page A-1) and in a portion of one General Mitigation Measure (Vol. I, Chap. II.E.1.a(2) of the Vegetation Management Environmental Impact Statement in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont (VMEIS.) The wording in Exhibit 2, as stated in the Record of Decision and the Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont provides direction concerning requirements for conducting project level inventories for those activities covered under the VMEIS. The differences between the exhibits are shown in bold. Determination of when project-level inventory information should be gathered will be made based on the direction now contained in the Regional supplement to FSM 2672 (February 13, 2002.)

Exhibit 1. Previous Wording

“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive, **is** done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers **all** available **inventories of** threatened, endangered, proposed and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area. **When adequate population inventory information is unavailable, it must be collected when the site has high potential for occupancy by a threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species.**”

Exhibit 2. New Wording

“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive **shall be** done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers available **information on** threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area.”

NFMA Significance:

This amendment is not a significant change in the Mississippi National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The determination that this is a non-significant amendment is made in accordance with the regulations in 16 USC 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f), and the Forest Service Manual 1922.5, Land and Resource Management Planning, Amendments. This plan

amendment meets the criteria for a non-significant amendment because these changes will not “significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goals and objectives originally projected... [or] have an important effect on the entire forest plan or affect resources throughout a large portion of the planning area during the planning period. (FSM 1922.52.)

**National Forests and Grasslands in Texas
Revised Land and Resource Management Plan**

**Amendment # 4
September 2002**

This amendment provides direction for the preparation of site-specific Biological Evaluations (BEs) including inventory requirements for Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive (PETS) species for the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas to make the process of conducting BEs more efficient and consistent throughout the Southern Region of the Forest Service. This amendment changes portions of the National Forests and Grasslands of Texas Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, March 1996, as follows:

Change in wording – Final EIS, Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont:

The wording in Exhibit 1 below is found in both the Record of Decision (page A-1) and in a portion of one General Mitigation Measure (Vol. I, Chap. II.E.1.a(2) of the Vegetation Management Environmental Impact Statement in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont (VMEIS.) The wording in Exhibit 2, as stated in the Record of Decision and the Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont provides direction concerning requirements for conducting project level inventories for those activities covered under the VMEIS. The differences between the exhibits are shown in bold. Determination of when project-level inventory information should be gathered will be made based on the direction now contained in the Regional supplement to FSM 2672 (February 13, 2002.)

Exhibit 1. Previous Wording
“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive, is done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers all available inventories of threatened, endangered, proposed and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area. When adequate population inventory information is unavailable, it must be collected when the site has high potential for occupancy by a threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species. ”

Exhibit 2. New Wording
“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive shall be done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers available information on threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area.”

NFMA Significance:

This amendment is not a significant change in the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the National Forests and Grasslands of Texas. The determination that this is a non-significant amendment is made in accordance with the regulations in 16 USC 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f), and the Forest Service Manual 1922.5, Land and Resource Management Planning, Amendments. This plan amendment meets the criteria for a non-significant amendment because these changes will not “significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goals and objectives originally projected... [or] have an important effect on the entire forest plan or affect resources throughout a large portion of the planning area during the planning period. (FSM 1922.52.)

**Sumter National Forest
Land and Resource Management Plan
(Forest Plan)**

**Amendment # 15
September 2002**

This amendment provides clarification of direction for the preparation of site-specific Biological Evaluations (BEs) including inventory requirements for Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive (PETS) species for the Sumter National Forest to make the process of conducting BEs more efficient and consistent throughout the Southern Region of the Forest Service. This amendment changes portions of the Sumter National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, Amendment #4, Exhibit H, - Record of Decision - Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont, January 1989, as follows:

Change in wording – Final EIS, Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont:

The wording in Exhibit 1 below is found in both the Record of Decision (page A-1) and in a portion of one General Mitigation Measure (Vol. I, Chap. II.E.1.a(2) of the Vegetation Management Environmental Impact Statement in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont. The wording in Exhibit 2, as stated in the Record of Decision and the Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Vegetation Management in the Coastal Plain/Piedmont provides direction concerning requirements for conducting project level inventories for those activities covered under the VMEIS. The differences between the exhibits are shown in bold. Determination of when project-level inventory information should be gathered will be made based on the direction now contained in the Regional supplement to FSM 2672 (February 13, 2002.)

Exhibit 1. Previous Wording

“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive, is done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers all available inventories of threatened, endangered, proposed and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area. When adequate population inventory information is unavailable, it must be collected when the site has high potential for occupancy by a threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species. ”

Exhibit 2. New Wording

“A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive shall be done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers available information on threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area.”
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NFMA Significance:

This amendment is not a significant change in the Sumter National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The determination that this is a non-significant amendment is made in accordance with the regulations in 16 USC 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f), and the Forest Service Manual 1922.5, Land and Resource Management Planning, Amendments. This plan amendment

meets the criteria for a non-significant amendment because these changes will not “significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goals and objectives originally projected... [or] have an important effect on the entire forest plan or affect resources throughout a large portion of the planning area during the planning period. (FSM 1922.52.)